

## Worth Reading

### ***Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century***

Jonathan M. House

University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2001

*Reviewed by Geoffrey French, a Counterintelligence Analyst with General Dynamics and a former Logistics Specialist for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve.*

With innumerable authors dissecting the smallest parts of military activity, it's refreshing to find a book that takes a wider view of warfighting and concentrates on how militaries become effective on the battlefield through planning and experience. Jonathan House does just that in his book *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century*. House, a history professor at Gordon College in Barnesville, GA, is a former career Army officer. His academic and military backgrounds serve the subject matter well. This book — part of the acclaimed Modern War Studies from the University of Kansas — reflects thorough research without getting lost in the details.

House originally began writing on the subject for a course he taught at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS. The original research paper's subtitle was *A Survey of 20th-Century Tactics, Doctrine, and Organization*, and this may be the easiest way to understand the focus of *Combined Arms Warfare*. It's not a "how-to" book, but a look at how past militaries have designed and implemented methods for integrating weapons systems. His book updates and expands that survey and is written with a wider audience in mind.

House divides the book into three sections: examining World War I, World War II and post-World War II through the Persian Gulf War in 1991. In each section, he follows military history as new weapons systems are introduced, developed, countered and finally integrated. House discusses the processes by which changes are made to military organizations, but judges solely on the basis of battlefield performance. For example, he cites Adolph Hitler's desire to have more Panzer Divisions — which required reducing the number of tanks in each division — as actually, if

unintentionally, improving the balance of arms in those divisions. The strongest parts of *Combined Arms Warfare*, perhaps fittingly, parallel the strengths of mechanized warfare. The book is at its best when discussing armored conflicts and the planning and strategy that supported them. The section on U.S. military strategy in the 1980s and its effect on the 1990s forces are very interesting. His discussion of conflicts without armored clashes, in particular, Vietnam for the United States and Afghanistan for the Soviet Union, are less insightful. The inability to exploit real combined-arms tactics in both conflicts stymied two powerful militaries facing adversaries without sophisticated weaponry. House understandably avoids devising a strategy that would have perhaps succeeded, sticking to historical descriptions of the two conflicts. Even so, it would seem that these would warrant lengthier discussions and stronger conclusions regarding organization and strategy.

Ultimately, *Combined Arms Warfare* is a very satisfying read and a good reference for those interested in strategy and tactics. The book is choppy in parts because of some poor transitions. For example, all three parts begin with a very brief description of a campaign or battle. These battles are never tied into any of the discussion that follows. However, House makes his points well and his meaning is always clear because he avoids oversimplification and offers no surefire formulas for success. Indeed, if his history proves one thing in combined arms warfare, it's that each campaign's tactics are tailored to the adversary, environment and mission. The best references are not always those that provide simple answers. Often they are those that give an accurate picture of a problem's complexity.

### ***On Hallowed Ground: The Last Battle for Pork Chop Hill***

Bill McWilliams

Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD

*Reviewed by Joe Sites, Executive Vice President, BTRC Inc., Fairfax, VA. During the period April-December 1952, he served as a platoon leader in the 1st Observation Battalion in the Chorwon Valley. The mission of his platoon was to locate enemy artillery and to direct counterbattery mission. On Hallowed Ground makes reference by name to 10 of his U.S. Military Academy (USMA) classmates.*

In this book, Bill McWilliams tells the story of the last battle for Pork Chop Hill and gives a good summary of the entire

Korean War. He also dramatically describes the U.S. Army soldier's ability to fight and endure against overwhelming odds.

Having read a number of books about the Korean War, including the classic *Pork Chop Hill* by S.L.A. Marshall, and viewing a number of Korean War movies — even participating in making *One Minute to Zero* — I was at first not inclined to read *On Hallowed Ground*. I am very glad I changed my mind.

*On Hallowed Ground* begins with factors that led to the war, then the war itself. The author's summary of the war's initial stages states: "From June 25 until Sept. 15, 1950, for the United Nations Forces, primarily ROK [Republic of Korea] and American, it was the kind of war all soldiers despise: scrambling to piece together divisions, regiments, battalions and companies that were not combat ready; a harried rush to the battlefield; confidence overflowing while underrating a disciplined, determined, well-trained and well-equipped enemy. Then stinging defeat, withdrawal and retreat. And in nearly every clash with the rapidly advancing North Korean Peoples Army, the In Mim Gun, heavy casualties." The author's overall summary for the period 1950 to early 1953 includes the initial contact and defeat of "Task Force Smith," Pusan Perimeter, the Inchon landing, the Pusan Perimeter breakout, the entry of the Chinese and the "yo-yo" war that ensued.

The author provides a poignant letter written in August 1951 by LT David Hughes, USMA class of 1950. This letter gives an insightful view of what the war was like for soldiers on the ground. Likewise, the author describes the agonizing peace talks that took place in 1952 and their relationship to the actions on the ground. This was of particular interest to me because from April 1952 to January 1953, I served as an Observation Battalion Platoon leader in the Chorwon Valley. In my position, I had no concept of the political maneuvering taking place at the highest levels and how it affected my soldiers at unit level. *On Hallowed Ground* answers a number of questions I had in 1952.

Beginning with operations in early 1953, the author covers in detail actions leading up to the first battle for Pork Chop Hill that took place March 23-24, 1953. In describing the second battle, the author provided me a great deal of new information. In particular, the material relating to LT Gorman Smith, USMA class of 1951, whose company was ordered to make a counterattack. Having carefully studied the terrain as well as previous and ongoing operations, Smith devised an innovative plan and executed it with successful precision.

The intervening 2 months between the second and last battles for Pork Chop Hill were filled by U.N. forces rebuilding the defenses and preparing for future attacks. The author cites 7th Infantry Division Commanding General MG Arthur G. Trudeau's former experience as an engineer officer and his detailed instructions on field fortifications. Meanwhile, the Chinese were making similar preparations, but with the focus on attack.

The timing of the Chinese attack for Pork Chop Hill's last battle was not known, but it was certain that they would attack. It began on July 6th. Despite overwhelming Chinese forces and their total disregard for the lives of their soldiers, the U.N. forces, primarily American, fought back with everything available. The book's title, *On Hallowed Ground*, is significant because the sacrifices of our soldiers did, in fact, make Pork Chop Hill "hallowed ground." The decision whether to hold on to Pork Chop Hill or withdraw was made at least at the 4-star level — probably higher. From the standpoint of a possible future requirement to stall a Chinese offensive aimed at Seoul, Pork Chop Hill had valid tactical value. However, once the final, most contentious negotiation agenda time was agreed to and initialed on July 9th (while the battle was still in progress), GEN Maxwell D. Taylor knew that after the truce was signed, Pork Chop Hill would sit in the demilitarized zone. At this point, Pork Chop Hill had no further tactical value and the withdrawal was ordered. The successful withdrawal began on July 11th.

In conclusion, the author describes some of the actions that took place after the fall of Pork Chop Hill until the signing of the armistice on July 27th and provides some interviews of battle participants.

From an equipment point of view, *On Hallowed Ground* reminded me of the important roles equipment played — items that no longer exist in today's Army, such as the searchlight that was a product of the "granddaddy" of our present Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate. In the Chorwon Valley, the searchlight made it possible to observe targets for miles. On nights with a low or medium cloud cover, light could be bounced off clouds to provide wide-area illumination and coverage.

This book can rekindle pride for our soldiers who fought in Korea. They continued the American Army tradition of bravery — especially in the most difficult circumstances.